

It's Never Too Late or Too Early to Quit Tobacco

Regardless of your age or smoking history there are tremendous advantages to quitting tobacco. In 1990, the Surgeon General reported that “quitting smoking has immediate and profound health benefits for men and women of all ages and these benefits apply to people with and without smoking-related disease.” The health benefits associated with quitting tobacco apply whether you are currently healthy or you already have smoking-related illness.

Never too late

Many older and middle-aged smokers and tobacco users wrongly believe that it is too late for them to quit because the damage they have done to their health is beyond the point of no return. Not true.

The fact is that whenever someone stops using tobacco her health begins to improve—almost immediately. Research has shown that quitting, at any time, greatly reduces the odds of dying from tobacco-related illness such as cancer, lung disease or heart disease. In addition, quitting also improves one's appearance, especially the premature wrinkling and skin damage associated with smoking.

Specific health benefits associated with quitting include:

- **Within 20 minutes of quitting:** Your heart rate drops to a healthier rate.
- **Twelve hours after quitting:** The carbon monoxide level in your blood drops to normal, allowing more oxygen to nourish your body.
- **Two weeks to three months after quitting:** Your circulation improves and your lung function increases.
- **One to nine months after quitting:** Coughing and shortness of breath decrease; cilia (tiny hair-like structures that move mucus out of the lungs) regain normal function in the lungs, increasing the ability to handle mucus, clean the lungs and reduce the risk of infection.
- **One year after quitting:** The excess risk of coronary heart disease is half that of a current smoker.
- **Five to 15 years after quitting:** Your stroke risk is reduced to that of a nonsmoker.

Never too early

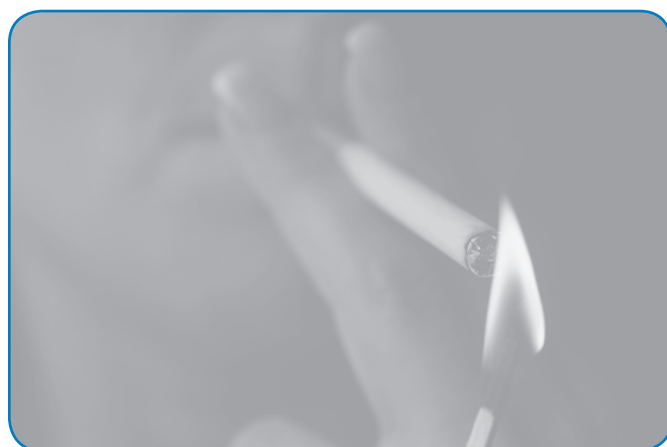
Smoking and chewing tobacco cause subtle, continual and almost imperceptible changes in health and appearance.

While it is true that heart disease and obstructive lung diseases such as emphysema and chronic bronchitis take decades to manifest, the underlying disease state that predisposes these horrible illnesses is at work each day.

Smoking robs your body of oxygen while depositing highly toxic particulates in your lungs. And contrary to popular belief, many young smokers and tobacco chewers develop life-threatening cancers while in their 20s, 30s and 40s.

Quitting while you are young will help you live longer and healthier. People who stop smoking before age 35 avoid 90 percent of the health risks attributable to tobacco use. Additional studies have found that people who quit smoking before age 50 have one-half the risk of dying in the next 15 years compared with continuing smokers.

Women who stop smoking before pregnancy or during the first three to four months of pregnancy reduce their risk of having a low birth-weight baby to that of women who have never smoked.



Call your EAP for confidential counseling and assistance:

(866)725-0602

www.achievesolutions.net/covacare

Solutions

Adjust Your Outlook on Holiday Spending

As the holiday season approaches, spend a little time before the parties and hubbub to think through your gift-giving intentions and how you plan to pay for it all.

Jot down the names of the people in your life who you intend to remember with a gift this holiday. Next, determine how much money you want to spend on each person. Now, revisit every name on your list and consider alternate or more modest ways to express your holiday good wishes. As you consider each gift recipient, keep these pointers in mind:

- **Don't assume that expensive gifts are the only way to show your feelings of fondness, affection or appreciation.** A gift of your time can be particularly meaningful, particularly to those who “have everything and need nothing.”
- **Suggest alternative or collective gift-giving ideas:**
 - o For teachers, consider approaching the class parent or taking the initiative yourself to suggest that interested families contribute to a collective class gift—perhaps a gift certificate to a local shopping mall.
 - o For extended families, instead of buying a gift for each individual, suggest randomly picking names so that each family member shops for one person only.
- **Examine your motives.** What are your reasons for spending more lavishly on certain people? In some cases, you may find your motives unhealthy. For example, you may spend more on someone because you feel guilty for not seeing enough of the person over the past year. In such a case, a good gift would be one that expresses your care for that person and a desire to be together.

Shop 'til you drop—or not

Keep a list of your intended giftees in your wallet, so that you can jot down ideas as they come up and take advantage of sale prices throughout the year. This way, you won't have to spend the holiday season shopping 'til you drop, but instead, you can enjoy time with friends and family.

Panic Attacks and the Holidays

For those who are prone to public panic, the holidays can be an additional source of stress and worry. If panic is interfering with your life, contact your EAP or personal physician.



Tobacco Cessation Resources

The cover article addresses the benefits of stopping tobacco use. If you need help quitting, contact your EAP or one of the organizations listed below:

American Cancer Society
(800) ACS-2345
www.cancer.org

American Lung Association
(800) LUNG-USA
www.lungusa.org

Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Quit Wizard
www.trytostop.org

SmokeSignals
www.smokesignals.net

The Stop Smoking Center
www.stopsmokingcenter.net

Tobacco Research Branch
National Cancer Institute
www.smokefree.gov



Solutions

Editor:

Amy Daugherty

Graphic Designer:

Susan Armstrong

Writers:

Drew Edwards, EdD, MS
Christine P. Martin